



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
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APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR RURAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY GRANTS

MORGANTOWN, WV – March 16, 2006—USDA Rural Development State Director Robert M. Steptoe, III, announces the availability of competitive grants of up to \$50,000 per application from the Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) program for Fiscal Year 2006. For multi-state projects, grant funds of up to \$150,000 will be available on a competitive basis.

The deadline for the receipt of applications in the Rural Development State Office is May 26, 2006. Any applications received after that date will not be considered for Fiscal Year 2006 funding. For further information, entities wishing to apply for assistance should contact John Comerci, Rural Business and Cooperative Programs Specialist, 481 Ragland Road, Beckley, WV 25801, telephone 304.253.9597 (extension 146), fax 304.252.5809, or TTY/TDD 304.284.4836. Completed applications should be mailed to the West Virginia Rural Development State Office, 75 High Street, Suite 320, Morgantown, WV 26505-7500.

The primary objective of the Rural Business Opportunity Grant program is to improve the economic conditions of rural areas. Assistance provided to rural areas under this program may include technical assistance for business development and economic development planning. A total of \$990,000 of non-earmarked funds is available for this program for Fiscal Year 2006.

A total of \$990,000 has been earmarked for Native Americans, and a total of \$990,000 earmarked for Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities and Rural Economic Area Partnerships. There is no project dollar amount limitation on applications for earmarked funds.

Further information can be found in the March 15 edition of the Federal Register at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/E6-3762.htm>.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural communities. Rural Development serves as the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers program assistance through its rural housing programs, rural business programs, and rural utilities programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Further information on USDA Rural Development may be obtained by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. In West Virginia, call 1-800-295-8228 to be put in touch with the appropriate personnel serving your county. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202.720.2600 (voice and TDD).

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